

Book Reviews

ARTHUR E. IMHOF and ØIVIND LARSEN, *Sozialgeschichte und Medizin. Probleme der quantifizierenden Quellenbearbeitung in der Sozial- und Medizingeschichte*, Oslo, Universitetsforlaget (Stuttgart, Fischer Verlag), 1975, 8vo, pp. xi, 322, illus., Nkr. 138.00.

The Scandinavian countries, as is well known, have a remarkable series of population statistics which cannot be rivalled anywhere else in the world. Nowhere is there so much data concerning the ordinary man that leads back into the pre-industrial eighteenth century and beyond. From the purely medical point of view, physicians have been able to investigate the hereditary aspects of a number of diseases, and from the historical aspect a remarkable mass of vital information is available. Thus entire parishes in Sweden and Finland have, from 1749 onwards, registers of monthly totals of births, marriages and deaths, with age, sex, cause of death, etc., given.

The authors of this excellent work, a historian of epidemics and social medicine and a medical demographer, have, therefore, been able to trace epidemics in great detail, demonstrating their relationships to topographical conditions, socio-economic status and to dietary conditions. In addition they have surveyed the diseases of whole communities, and they present their findings both statistically and graphically, showing the fluctuation of infections as biological agents over long periods. To supplement this rich source, Drs. Imhof and Larsen have drawn upon and analysed material from the diaries of physicians, from military, naval and industrial medical reports, from quarantine regulations, and so forth.

In their book a good deal of space is devoted to the presentation of the methods of recording and utilization of the data accumulated, manual, mechanical and electronic. Thus, although the authors' analytical studies relate to specific Scandinavian locations, and therefore to local conditions and specified periods, similar research can be carried out by other workers elsewhere, using their techniques. In order to find a way through their masses of data, which today can be collected by teams and by computers, and to avoid a history divided into many separate and unconnected parts, the authors constructed and developed graphically a series of models and charts. They could relate events to the quality of the harvests, depict morbidity, fatality and mortality, determine the structure of populations and the effect on them of conditions varying from absolute health to death. The text is well documented and there is an excellent bibliography.

This book can be recommended to all medical historians, especially those concerned with demography, epidemiology and the social and economic aspects of medicine over the last two hundred years. It should also be of great interest to physicians and other workers investigating present-day population and epidemiological problems; their modern conclusions are to some extent based on the evidence of the past; such as the authors display here with their combined skills. An English translation would be welcomed.

H. G. LAZELL, *From pills to penicillin. The Beecham story. A personal account*, London, Heinemann, 1975, 8vo, pp. [viii], 208, illus., £4.90.

Mr. Lazell spent his whole life in the pharmaceutical industry (1930–1968), and